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Christ going forth to purify the World:

A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

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The following Discourse was delivered before the Foreign Evangelical Society, just as it was about to pass into The American and Foreign Christian Union. It was repeated at Newark, Brooklyn, Boston and some other places. The reasons which have delayed its publication, it is not necessary to state. It is now printed at the request of the Directors of the New Organization. which is effieiently pursuing the great work of evangelizing the Papal World.

SERMON.

Whose fan is in his hand, and He will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.—Matth. iii, 12.

It was in this forcible and graphic manner, that John the Baptist announced the presence and the purpose of Christ the great Purifier. The passage has been sometimes understood, as merely setting forth the work of judgment which he was about to do in respect to the Jewish nation. Beyond a doubt, however, it has a wider sweep. We take it as a proclamation that the Son of God, like the fanner intent on the cleansing of the threshing floor, was then about to undertake the task, in a formal and official manner, of effecting a complete moral purification of the world. As the last and most enlightened of the prophets, John knew that the promised kingdom of Messiah was at that time to be set up; and that it was thenceforward steadily to progress, till the blessed consummation should be reached, in which light should triumph over darkness, and good over evil among men. He also understood that although the realization of the splendid visions of the earlier prophets was not to be brought about by the immediate interposition

of almighty power, yet that Christ, as the Head and administrator of the new economy, should be the prime mover in the work.

From that day to the present, the prediction has been in the process of fulfilment. The regeneration of the world, has, we believe, been all the while advancing; not indeed, without many impediments and a vigorous resistance. The great adversary of God and man, has done his best, both by fraud and force, to keep possession of his old domain. He has assailed the well-being of mankind at every vulnerable point; he has had recourse to all modes of warfare and to every sort of weapons; and he has, even, at times, seemed to have so greatly the advantage in the struggle, that his servants have ventured to begin to sound a triumph; but in one way or another, it has happened again and again, that when he has been just ready to rejoice in the achievement of some imagined victory, he has been effectually baffled and overthrown. His mines have sprung beneath his own battalions. His forces have been routed by the recoil of his own artillery. His troops have been set man against man among themselves, and thrown into inextricable confusion. In every great emergency, the Spirit of the Lord has lifted up a standard against him.

But where are we now? How far has the work advanced? In what stage of the purifying process have we our place and our duty? This is a matter which it is of great moment that we should fully understand. If the day is drawing nigh, in which the nations shall rise to the life and purity and happiness to which divine Truth and

divine Love is ultimately to bring them, we ought to know it for our encouragement. If it be true that, by the course of events in ages past, the way of the Lord has been prepared, and now at last the rallying for the final struggle has arrived, who would not rush to fill some post? Who would not feel his heart beating high with holy courage? We fully believe that the LAST STAGE of the process of cleansing a world long sunk in the deep pollutions of the apostacy, is NOW REACHED. We believe that it can now be said in a far more direct and emphatic sense than in the time of John, "His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor." This cleansing work of Christ, however, will not be in respect to the manner of its accomplishment, like the quiet task of the fanner. On the contrary, it will doubtless involve the most violent convulsions the world has ever seen. Even now we see all things in commotion. We see, as it were, the going forth of a mighty conqueror; and we can not help asking with the prophet, "Who is this that cometh from Edom? with dyed garments from Bosrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?" Then we seem distinctly to hear the thrilling answer: "I that speak in righteousness mighty to save. The day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come!" Were it possible, we would write, in words of fire, before the eyes of all who look for the reign of God on earth, that with the resources of infinite wisdom and almighty power, the Lord Jesus Christ, IS NOW ADDRESSING HIMSELF DIRECTLY TO THE WORK OF COMPLETING THE MORAL CLEANSING OF THE WORLD.

We must understand the past, or we can not understand the present. What has Christ done already, is necessarily preliminary to the question, What is he doing now. The work of purifying the world, on which the Forerunner saw him, when on earth, about to enter, necessarily supposed three stages or periods of development; stages or periods clearly distinguishable, although not marked off by precise and definite lines, but rather running more or less into each other. We say that this arrangement was a matter of necessity; because it was not by the immediate power of God, but by an instrumental, and in some sense, natural growth, that the divine kingdom was to rise. Such was the divine purpose from the beginning.

I. We may characterize the first stage of the purifying process as the *initiative or introductory stage.* First of all, the cleansing fountain was to be opened in the blood of the dying Lamb of God. The Cross was to be set up as the source of a mighty moral power. The promise of the Holy Ghost, was to be fulfilled, and his mission to be opened in a signal manner. The Gospel also, was to be written, and to be preached among all the accessible nations; and by the gathering of churches and the establishment of Christian ordinances the kingdom of God was to receive a visible, organic form. All this was shortly done. From Calvary the word of life went forth; and the leaven of saving truth was soon infused into the dark and corrupting masses of mankind. We need not say with what results. We need not stay to speak of the simplicity and power of primitive piety;

nor to recount the victories of Christian truth in its first collision with the systems and the principles of error. It is enough to say, in passing, that in this introductory period of Christianity, everything was accomplished which the nature of the case admitted. The first onset was a victory; so far as a victory was possible in the circumstances of the times. The "noble army of the martyrs" furnished an admirable demonstration of the power of the Gospel to call forth the highest type of human character; and the deserted temples of idolatry bore a reluctant, but emphatic testimony, to the vital energy of Christian doctrine. The work of moral transformation was thus efficiently begun.

II. The second stage of the work of the Son of God in the purification of the world, we may fitly call the *experimental stage*. This part of the process, as we understand the matter, has been steadily going forward from the days of Constantine, and even earlier, down to the present time. The course of divine Providence through this long period, as respects its bearing on the spiritual enlightenment and elevation of mankind in the final triumph of the Gospel, has perhaps not been sufficiently considered. It is too commonly the impression in glancing towards the past, that while these tedious centuries were passing over a groaning world, the work of regenerating humanity was stationary, or even retrograde. We can not believe this for a moment. We can not admit the thought that Jesus Christ has ever ceased to prosecute the purifying work to the commence-

ment of which He put his hand when he dwelt below. We are by no means of the number who adopt the notion that the dark ages were really not dark at all; but rather were the golden ages of human history. But dark as they were, corrupt and wretched as in many respects they were, profound as was the intellectual slumber in which they wrapped the masses, we yet claim confidentially the entire period, from the days of the decline of primitive piety, to the days of modern revival, as a period of steady progress to God's kingdom among men. Our meaning is, that there were certain experiments which it was a matter of necessity, in the absence of miraculous interpositions, that humanity should be left to try, before it could fully and universally come under the dominion of the simple truth of God; and that the divine Purifier, in his wise administration, has appropriated this period chiefly to the working out of these experiments. This view strikes us as having most important bearings on the present and the future; we will therefore give it some little illustration.

In the first place, it was inevitable that Philosophy should thoroughly try her speculative acuteness, in the attempt to harmonize the truths of revealed religion with her own established formulas. This would naturally follow from the fact that Christianity assumed to speak dogmatically and with authority, on many of the chief questions on which speculative reason had been wont to try its acuteness and its insight. It was not to be imagined that Philosophy, not now in her infancy but developed into a vigorous maturity, would humbly acquiesce

in this assumption and quietly abandon the field of abstruse inquiry. She had imbibed her spirit, settled her canons and elaborated her systems, under the influence or at least within the atmosphere, of sensual Paganism; and priding herself on the renown of her Sages and her Schools, she was so puffed up with the conceit of wisdom, that if she gave heed to Christianity at all, it could only be in a patronizing way; as if she would kindly lend her light to render it intelligible to the world. The Platonizing Fathers of the Church led off in the attempt to test the facts revealed to faith in the philosophic crucible. Then followed the long array of the Schoolmen, with their dialectics and subtile and interminable refinements; and by them the process was carried on. Modern metaphysicians have apparently well nigh completed the curriculum of the possible, in the variously modified systems of Pantheistic Transcendentalism.

It was necessary, again, that the Hierarchical experiment should be made; that it should be shown by actual trial, what would be the fruits of priestly domination; of the subjection of the human mind to the necessity of a blind and unquestioning submission to authority in matters pertaining to the conscience. Those who were the constituted teachers in the church, whose official position at once required them to surpass others in their knowledge of divine truth and entitled them to speak with some measure of authority, could not but have it in their power, especially in their ministrations to the ignorant, to exert an influence which should be well nigh decisive. It would often seem to be really best that there should

be an unhesitating submission to their superior wisdom, on the part of those who were wanting in the capacity or the means of examining for themselves. How easily then, as human nature is, would even the most upright and pious religious instructors, without the light of experience on the subject, convince themselves that they might rightfully assume to control the faith and the consciences of others! How difficult would be the task to those who were in the place of learners, of determining beforehand what would be the consequences of implicit subjection to authority, the giving up of the right of private judgment! Of this problem, the self styled successors of Saint Peter have wrought out an ample solution in the sight of all men. The voluminous records of Papal abominations, written in the tears and blood of millions, and made up at some periods of but little else than exhibitions of debasing ignorance and cruel superstition, detail the results in all their dark particulars.

It was also necessary that the light of experience should be thrown upon the question of Religious Seclusion, as a means of a highly spiritual life. The Gospel came demanding entire devotion to God. It insisted on self-discipline, the mortification of the appetites and passions, deadness to the world, and a holy delight in God and in spiritual things. It urged the duties of watchfulness, prayer and meditation on divine truth; and promised great rewards to those who should gain the victory over the world by faith. It was the most natural thing imaginable that minds of a contemplative and quiet habit, being constitutionally disposed to seek retirement from

the noisy world, should fancy such a state to be eminently favorable to a devout and holy life. Asceticism had existed too, before the promulgation of Christianity; and so had a traditional sanction to recommend it. The early Anchorites, who obtained such renown for sanctity in the deserts of Egypt, and the mountain fastnesses of Palestine, while as yet Christianity was comparatively pure, and the numerous monastic orders of later and corrupter ages, have made full trial in this matter, and the result is clear. It has been shown that holy principle and affection can be effectually and happily developed only in connection with a life of benevolent activity, and in direct contact with the world.

It was necessary further, that the consequences of an alliance between the Formal and Artistic on the one hand, and the purely Spiritual on the other, should be demonstrated by experiment. There is a natural affinity between the beautiful and the good. The disposition of the mind to connect them in its associations, would lead of course to a desire and effort to combine taste and piety, so far as might be practicable. But how far this might be effected; to what extent the one might usefully be made the ally of the other; and at what point the danger would arise that the beauty of form and sense would fix attention on itself to the prejudice of the higher attractions of the spiritual and divine; all this it was difficult beforehand to determine. Between the art and the religion of Pagan Antiquity, there had been a complete alliance; so that the one was, as it were, the embodiment of the other, and it was not unnatural to think that a similar alliance

might exist when Christianity prevailed. Papal Rome inherited the treasures of art which had survived the ruins of the Empire; and thus became the centre and school of taste to the civilized world. When, therefore, she grew into prosperity, and surrounded herself with the means of luxury and splendor, she reared her vast Cathedrals, and set up her jeweled altars, and employed the pencil and the chisel to add to the enchantment of her worship; and combining with the whole the magic power of music and the dazzling show of imposing pomps and ceremonies, she has supplied a demonstration as complete as it is instructive.

It was necessary likewise, that there should be a fair experiment of the practical working of a union between the Spiritual and the Temporal, the connection of Church and State. The Romish Church, in the ages of her entire ascendancy, rendered this union so universal and complete among the states of Christendom, and perpetuated it so long, that even Protestantism has found it difficult to escape from the entanglement. There has been ample time for the unfolding of the tendencies of this unnatural and adulterous conjunction. The monstrous evils which have been its offspring, are fast engaging the attention and arousing the indignation of the world; and loud and determined voices are now lifted up demanding a divorce; voices which will never be hushed again till a divorce is finally accomplished.

It was necessary yet again, that Infidelity should have time to try every method of attack on the citadel of Christian truth, to the end that the impregnable strength

of its entrenchments might be seen. English Deism led on in this assault. Herbert and Tindal, Shaftsbury and Bolingbroke, Hume and Gibbon, were certainly no mean antagonists. They did all that eloquent, elaborate, ingenious sophistry could do, but with no detriment to the stability of Revelation. The virtual Atheism of Voltaire, Rousseau and their associates in France, poured out from another quarter, the poisoned arrows of malignant ridicule and cutting satire, aided immensely by the intolerable abuses of the Romish Church.* Germany furnished the third and latest type. Rationalism, with its coolness, its learning, and its iron diligence, has raked and sifted, and turned and overturned, till at last it has well nigh buried itself in its own accumulated rubbish, and is beginning to awake from its presumptuous dream. Strauss has nauseated it with its own elixir.

And then, lastly, it was not less necessary that certain experiments should be made, illustrative of the true spirit and the practical efficacy of Christianity itself. It was important that an illustration should be given of the unconquerable energy of Christian faith, in its calm and firm endurance of the fiercest persecutions, and its patient holding out through long and dark and agonizing days of trial. It was needful that proof should be supplied that Christianity possesses an indestructible vitality, a life which can survive all social revolutions and even the

* See Voltaire's General History—Passim. One can not contemplate the picture of Christianity as it lay before his mind, in the unsightliness of its corruptions, without admitting that it does afford some show of apology for his rancorous hostility to the Gospel and its Author.

worst abuses in its own organization and discipline. It was to be shown, that it has an elastic force sufficient to enable it to heave from itself the crushing masses of old corruptions, and to evolve again spiritual life and light, from darkness and apparent death. It was to be made to appear quite certain, that Revelation has nothing to fear from the advancement of sound learning, and the discoveries of sober science; but on the contrary that these, in their progress, are to be her friendly and genial coadjutors. There was an absolute necessity in the nature of the case, that these things should have the certainty of experimental demonstration.

Now all these, and other similar experiments, are obviously an essential part of the purifying work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and what we have called the experimental stage or period of this work, has, we believe, wrought them out in a thorough manner. And this especially we insist on, that these experiments are doubtless final. They are not to be repeated. Philosophy, in its attempts to solve the higher problems of our being, has had its day. The Hierarchy in its assumed dominion over conscience, has had its day. The Cloister has had its day. The sensualism of Form and Art has had its day. The alliance of Church and State has had its day. Infidelity has had its day. Each has wrought out its appropriate results, and the great Purifier has now nearly or quite done with them all forever. While on the other hand, those experiments which have served to exhibit the true genius of Christianity, and to place its efficiency beyond all question, are to live in the memory of the

Church, to sustain her constancy and courage, and to warm her faith and hope into a holy and unquenchable enthusiasm. Here then is a great and essential work accomplished. Not in vain have these fifteen centuries, in which there has been so much to the eye of sense that looked disheartening, passed over depressed and sorrowing humanity. Christ has not rested from his undertaking all the while. Not a day has been without its bearing on the grand result.

III. We come now to speak of the third, and as we conceive the last stage in the purifying work of Christ. This we may characterize as distinctively *the transforming stage*; as the period, in other words, in which the advances of humanity towards a purer and a happier state, are to be rapid, manifest and permanent. While the experimental period has been for some time drawing to a close, the opening of this final one has been apparent. Now it is felt by all men, at least by all who are attentive to the movements of the times, that a new era in human affairs has been commenced. By visible signs the Son of Man is coming. The brightness of his approach is already seen streaking the retreating darkness of the past, with the blushes of the promised morning. Already is it plain, that the breath of his mouth is kindling up the unquenchable fires that shall consume the accumulated chaff of ages. The tide of purifying influence, has hitherto been not unlike a river flowing under ground; but now at last we see it bursting forth, ready to flow all abroad with a life-giving and resistless power. If we

read aright the tokens. Progress is henceforth everywhere to be the order of the day. Every new victory of truth, is to be substantially a final victory. Each really forward step of struggling humanity, is to be a step from which there shall be no receding. We shall be told, perhaps, that we are over sanguine. It may seem, even to some Christians, that to entertain such views is to be borne away by a benevolent enthusiasm. But as the ground of the strong convictions now expressed, there are certain unquestionable facts, to which we will refer.

Before alluding to these, however, it is proper to remark, that in what it is proposed to say in illustration of this part of the subject, we shall have reference chiefly to the nations of Christendom, and more particularly to those of Europe. The nations of Western Europe, as the seats of the highest Civilizations both of ancient and modern times, as the first political powers which now exist, and as the chief fountains, for the present, of literature and thought, must be expected to lead off in the grand march of humanity towards a final disenthrallment. The signs of that event must of course be expected to be there first unequivocally manifest. The complete moral regeneration of Christendom, must inevitably bring with it, or speedily draw after it, the renovation of the world.

But to proceed now to the facts. To us, as believers in the divine authority of the Bible and as Protestants, it is an undoubted fact, that Evangelical Truth, the simple, pure and vital truth which lies on the face of the Holy Scriptures, will, with the divine blessing, infallibly purify and save the world, if brought into actual contact with

the minds of men. We well know that individual man needs nothing but this, received into his understanding and his heart, to elevate and bless him. He is a conscious sinner. The Bible tells him that through the bleeding Lamb of God, he may have free pardon. He is a child of sorrow. The Bible tells him, that in Christ Jesus, God will be his Father and Comforter. Sin has debased his whole nature; and rendered his aims selfish and his wishes groveling. The Bible breathes around him the divine spirit of benevolence; and at the same time it leads him into the noblest the most inspiring fields of thought, and presents to his contemplation the purest and grandest objects in the universe. We understand equally well, that Society needs nothing but the Bible to perfect both its spirit and its organization. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." There is the fundamental doctrine of equality. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." There is a Bill of Rights in comparison with which that of King John is but a trifle; it is the *Magna Charta* granted by God himself for the benefit of all men. We know, in short, that wherever the Bible goes, men are taught their true relations and their duties; what their capabilities are and what are the proper ends of their existence. Let them learn these things aright, and they will rise in conscious power, to think and to act with manly freedom; and they will assail the abuses and oppressions which have borne them down, till the last vestige of them shall be swept away.

It is a second noticeable fact, that every requisite

agency is now in readiness, for the speedy and universal dissemination of Evangelical Truth. It is a circumstance worthy to be considered, that the great organizations for the spread of the Holy Scriptures and other religious books, should have been brought into existence just as the time was coming when the work of printing them could be executed with the utmost rapidity and economy, and when the way was about to be opened for the easy introduction of them everywhere. Imagine the formation of a Bible or a Tract Society in the days of Abelard or of Roger Bacon. How many copies can you conceive it to have issued annually? By what means could it have escaped the strangling grasp of Rome? Or, not to mention these things, where among the masses could intelligent readers have been found? With what sort of facilities could the business of distribution have been prosecuted? But now the Bible Societies, quietly planted where no hostile power can arrest or even disturb their work, are issuing every day, eight or ten thousand copies of the Scriptures, pouring out as it were a mighty tide of light upon the world; while kindred associations are also daily striking off some millions of pages of evangelical matter to which may be added all that is published by private enterprize. Thrown into the great channels of intercommunication, these volumes in any numbers, can be placed at any point in a very few hours or days. Meanwhile all Christendom abounds with readers; and Rome, although she dreads and hates the light as cordially as ever, no longer has the power to hinder its diffusion. Even Spain herself, has been for

some time open to a considerable extent to those who distribute the Word of God; and in that strong hold of Papal intolerance and bigotry, an earnest voice has of late been lifted up in favor of perfect religious toleration. It is but a few years since, that a diplomatic agent of Great Britain had his Bible taken from him on entering the Papal territory; and in spite of all remonstrance was obliged to submit to the indignity. But during the late commotions, on the banks of the Tiber and between the Vatican and the Quirinal, the Holy Scriptures in the Italian language have been issued from the press, and widely distributed among the people. By such agencies, notwithstanding all opposing influences, the truths of revealed religion are finding their way to the common mind in every part of Europe. The batteries wherewith to demolish the entrenchments of the Prince of darkness, are well planted, and want only a vigorous working to lay open his secret chambers to the sun.

A third fact is of equal interest and significance. It is this: that over a large part of Europe, humanity exhibits not a little of that peculiar restlessness and longing which disposes to the reception of the Gospel, and which the Gospel alone can meet. This is a circumstance of which observation only can give the full impression. Pass through the cities and villages of France and Belgium, through Italy, Switzerland and Germany, and get a free expression of the profounder current of feeling which prevails among the middle and lower classes of society. It may be difficult to unlock the heart. But when it can be done, it will very generally be found that there is a

deep inward dissatisfaction, a consciousness of want, a vehement yearning, often perhaps vague and scarcely intelligible to itself. Men feel as respects themselves that *they* are not what they should be. They feel that society is not what it should be; that religious institutions are not what they should be; and that something higher and better than anything they know, must be possible, as the condition and the end of human life. They are tired of empirical experiments and political contrivances for the mending of the world; and sometimes, at which we can not wonder after their many disappointments, are ready to despair of relief entirely. There are probably hundreds of thousands to be found in continental Europe, of whose present state of feeling this is a sufficiently accurate description.* And what is this state of mind? When under the preaching of the Gospel we find an individual who is weary of himself, sick of the pleasures of the world, and pressed with a sense of his need of something better, what do we deem it, but a preparation of the heart by the Holy Ghost to receive the satisfying gift of God?

* The statements of Count Guicciardini as given in the letter of M. De Pressense to the New York Independent of July 17th, 1851, furnish a striking illustration of what is here said. "Seeds of Gospel truth were deposited in some minds by foreign Christians visiting Florence. But all on a sudden, under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, the profoundest religious wants were developed and religious interest excited. The hand of the Lord alone hath done it, and it hath acted in its sovereignty. Those who had a long time in vain endeavored to bring a single soul to the Lord, have suddenly seen numbers of Italians resorting to them hungering and thirsting for righteousness, inquiring for the Scriptures and reading them with delight. M. Guicciardini counts at Florence already more than two thousand persons who in various degrees are under the influence of the Gospel, some still seeking it, others having already found it. The movement spreads equally in the country."—*De Pressense's Letter.*

And why is it not to be deemed the same wherever found? Certain it is, that many who have been met in this frame of mind by Evangelists and Colporteurs, have gladly and savingly received the Word of God. The truth must win its way, even among blind and deluded Romanists, when they perceive that it brings them just the rest for which their hearts have long been aching. The famishing will eat if you give them bread. They will drink when you make the living waters to gush forth at their feet. Even ignorance and superstition, are rarely able utterly to destroy the moral instincts of the soul.

Our fourth fact is, that in the administration of his Providence, God is now manifestly working with and for his Truth, in a most extraordinary manner. This is what the Prophets plainly intimate should come to pass. It is what ought to have been expected, and is a rebuke to the unbelief of the Christian Church. It would seem but natural to anticipate that in going about to complete his work as the Purifier of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ should bring the course of his Providence into harmonious and powerful cooperation with the influences of his Word; and that he should so direct the great movements of society, as to cause it to be seen and felt, that Nations and Kings and Dynasties were all at his disposal. This he has done and is doing still. The establishment of our own free institutions and the French Revolution which soon followed, at the close of the last century, constituted the opening of the great struggle which now is waxing hot, for the Cardinal Rights of Man. Next came the Man of Destiny, as he loved to

style himself: and he *was* the Man of Destiny in a far higher sense than it ever entered into his own head to dream. We confidently affirm, that Napoleon was one of the most efficient Missionaries that God has ever employed in the work of the world's recovery. He knew not God indeed, and served him blindly and without design. But who first taught the people of Europe to think lightly of the sacredness of kings, and stripped away from royalty at once its divine right and its venerable associations? Napoleon, when he handled legitimate sovereigns as mere puppets, and raised to thrones men taken from the common people. Who effectually broke up the habits of thought which had come down from feudal ages, and to which the distinctions of hereditary nobility owed their chief power to command respect? Napoleon, when in place of men whose only merit was an ancient and honorable title, he gathered around him, and raised to the highest posts of honor, those who had distinguished themselves by their individual talent. Who by the Public Works which he executed or projected, waked up the idea of Progress in the general mind, and shamed the indolence and selfishness of the old regimes? Napoleon; and no wonder that as the people look on these, they still are impressed by the vastness of his views, and still feel the stirring impulses of his mighty mind. We are no admirers of the personal character of Napoleon; but it is impossible to observe the results of his career, and not greatly admire the wisdom of God as displayed in the ends which it used him to accomplish. Other important advances were made, some of them

peaceably as in England, after the downfall of the Emperor, and, before the opening of the year eighteen hundred forty eight. That most eventful year developed as much of incident and change as has ordinarily filled a Century. Where now is that proud King, who in violation of his coronation oath, perverted the Charter to the oppression of good men, and on the coast of Africa and in the Islands of the Sea opposed the cause of Christ and vexed his servants? Where now are the glories of the Tuileries and of St. Cloud? The waves of popular tumult have engulphed the monarchy itself. The word of Christ is no longer bound in France.* How has it fared with Pius IX, the liberal Pope. He has found that the Papal influence of ages, has done a work of degradation which it is now no easy matter to repair. With a courage to be commended, he attempted to drive the Chariot of Reform; but his arm proved too feeble to reign in the mettled steeds, and so he leaped in terror from his seat, and they went dashing on, leaving the Holy Father prostrate by the wayside. The Inquisition has been emptied of its hapless prisoners, and its accursed implements of torture exposed to the public gaze; and by a variety of means the subjects of the Papacy in the Eternal City itself, have been filled with abhorrence of priestly domination. Austria and Prussia and the smaller German states, have been shaken as with the rocking of an earth-

* One of the most hopeful indications for France, is an increasing demand for the Holy Scriptures among the people. It is stated on good authority, that the booksellers of Paris are now selling at the rate of from seven to eight thousand copies a year, in addition to what are distributed by Bible Societies.

quake; and there is hardly a corner of the Continent, except where the iron hand of the Autocrat is felt, that has not been roused to the hope of better days. Never before has God so arisen to shake terribly the earth.

No one can well predict precisely what is to be the future course of political events among the Powers of Europe. But we may be sure of this, that the cause of truth has already gained immensely by the recent movements; and equally sure that to recede will be found impossible. A true principle, once developed in the mind, can never be wrested from it. The power of excited thought is irresistible. Like the pent up fires of the volcano it will make to itself a way, or it will shatter the whole structure of society, and spread on every side the fragments of its firmest institutions. Sovereigns may learn little amid the storms of revolution; but the people at least have learned some lessons not likely to be soon forgotten. The nations do not groan and travail in pain together and all for nothing. Whatever may be the immediate issues of the late convulsive throes, it will at length appear, we are persuaded, that the cleansing fan of the Purifier has been effectively at work.

We add, as the last fact to be noticed, that there is an evident reviving of the life and power of Spiritual Piety in the Evangelical Churches of Christendom. That such is, really, the fact, will doubtless be generally conceded. It has been evinced by the increased frequency and power of special seasons of refreshing under the faithful preaching of the Gospel. It has appeared in the indications of

a deeper sense of obligation among Christians of all classes, to live and labor for the glory of Christ and the coming of his kingdom. It has been manifested in the encouragement and faith, the primitive zeal and self-devotion, which for the last few years have been exhibited by the feeble bands of disciples scattered here and there in Papal countries, at Paris, at Geneva, at various points beyond the Rhine and in the North of Europe, where there have been raised up living and powerful witnesses for the Truth as it is in Jesus. It has revealed itself in a growing unity of spirit among all who have genuine faith in Christ. And it can not reasonably be doubted, that the great movements of the Church for the conversion of the entire world to Christ, have been at once the fruit of the quickening breath of the Holy Ghost, and the occasion of the bestowment of his gifts in richer measure. Is it not plain, my brethren, that great as the deficiencies still are, there is an increasing number who do glory in the Cross, and who can say with Paul, "For me to live is Christ." Is not the divine life, in its deeper and more spiritual experiences, coming to be more extensively and practically understood? The nature of prayer, the necessity of prayer, the power of prayer,—are not far better views in respect to this whole subject, at least beginning to pervade the church? And finally, are there not signs of a growing faith in the mission of the Divine Spirit, and larger expectations of such displays of his transforming grace as have never yet been witnessed? As it is by the Church, as the human instrumentality, that Christ will carry forward his cleansing work, in the

world at large, such indications of a purifying process in the Church herself, is an omen whose significance can not be mistaken. We know that the powers of darkness will then tremble and recede, when bearing the Word of God, and led on by the Providence of God, the Church shall be seen advancing in the simplicity of faith, in the prevalence of prayer, and in the commanding beauty of true holiness.

We ask now any candid person who believes the Bible, to place before him the great facts to which we have alluded, in their just relations, and then to say, if there are not solid grounds for the belief that our blessed Lord is at this time entering on the final, the consummating stage of his work of love in the moral cleansing of the world. You will admit, my brethren, that there are impressive indications of such a manifestation of the Son of Man. You believe the truth of prophecy. You believe that Messiah's holy and happy kingdom is certainly to come; and in its coming to fill and to transform the earth. Consider, then, that it passed its initiatory period many centuries ago; and that the practical experiments connected with it which were necessary, have been tried and are tending fast to a conclusion; and lastly, ponder the admitted facts, that Evangelical Truth, the Bible, in a word, is God's appointed means for the purification of the world; that the agencies for its universal dissemination are now ready; that the hearts of hundreds of thousands in Christendom, particularly among those who have been the victims of the Papacy, are deeply conscious of their

spiritual wants and so in a measure prepared to welcome it, that the Providence of God is almost working miracles among the nations for its advancement; and lastly that the Holy Ghost is breathing on the Universal Church and warming it to vigorous life and action. In such a view of the whole subject, can you doubt, dare you doubt, that the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords is going forth at last in the glory of his own transforming power, to consume the chaff, and thoroughly to cleanse his floor.

And what, my Christian brethren,—what is the bearing of this deeply interesting truth on our individual duty? Is it not this: that it is the hand of Jesus Christ himself, that has laid out before us the work of thoroughly evangelizing Christendom; and that it is his own voice that is calling all his friends to urge it on with unfaltering zeal. Ah yes, Christians! The cry that comes to you from many of the strangers that are crowding to your shores; that reaches you from Canada, from Mexico, and South America, from wretched Ireland, from France, Switzerland and Italy, in short, from every part of Europe is the call of Christ the Purifier, summoning his people to cooperate with him in his last, his transforming work on earth. *His fan is in his hand!* He is separating the precious from the vile. This is a sufficient explanation of the terrible convulsions that of late have rent the nations. IT IS HE, that has marshaled the forces and set in order the battle, partly of physical and partly of moral power, that now is well begun. We can not understand it. We see the mustered hosts sweeping now

this way and now that. The combatants are marching and counter marching, and are often so obscured by the smoke and dust of the encounter, and so mingled in the great melee, that to our limited observation, all is confusion and uncertainty. But not so to Christ. To his eye all is clear. He is directing every movement. He comprehends the whole affair. There is to him no such distinction as we make between the religious and the political. All that is going forward in the struggles of the civilized world is religious, in his view; that is to say, all stands alike related to the advancement of his Kingdom. When he shall say to the conflicting forces, *Peace, be still!*—the tumult of the people will die into a calm; and then it will be more clearly seen for what the battle has been fought. It will appear that all this agitation and overturning is but the breaking open of the way, that his servants may go forth everywhere and scatter the good seed of the kingdom.

It is true, as we are well aware, that there are darker views than those which we have taken of the present state of the nominally Christian world. We presume there are those who still look forward only with sad foreboding; who have no eyes to see the signs of promise which are offered for the encouragement of Christian faith and effort; and who even despair of the power of Christianity itself, as a spiritual system, to hold on its way to a universal triumph. It will be suggested that there is yet great strength in the Papal system, that Infidelity is still furiously rampant, and that there is great imperfection in the Church. We admit the facts.

But then we ask, what of them? Have we affirmed that this last contest between vital Truth and deadly Error, is going to be a trifling skirmish? Or that we imagine it will very soon be over? We entertain no such opinion. We doubt not that the resistance will be desperate beyond all precedent; and the more because the event of the struggle must obviously be decisive. But on the other hand, we are sure that the onset is going to be such as no past age has witnessed. The reigning Potentates of Europe may still retain their crowns, perhaps it is best they should; to bring back the days of Absolutism, however, will be utterly beyond their power. The unhappy Pope may yet wear his tiara for a while; by the aid of others, we presume he will. But with what opiate can he put to sleep again the roused up spirit of the Italian people, or quench their burning irrepressible desires for freedom. With what form of conjuration will he exorcise the evil spirits which, in the shape of Bibles, books and tracts, have taken possession of the Patrimony of St. Peter? Not even another Hildebrand could restore to the Roman See its lost dominion over mind. And as to Infidelity, routed as she has been everywhere in argument, repudiated as she is and must be by the moral instincts of the soul, she can have no new victories to gain in a general conflict with the Gospel. She is doomed to be consumed among the chaff.*

* The signal failure of Infidelity to find any tenable ground on which to contend in argument against Divine Revelation, does not indeed prevent the prevalence of a vast amount of practical unbelief. But the scepticism which has so extensively pervaded France and other parts of Western

Yes! carry directly to the heart of Christendom the simple, saving truths of the New Testament, and nothing more is needed. And this is the work which Christ is bidding us to do without delay. We rejoice in what is doing to send life to the heathen nations; but we know that we are effectually helping on the conversion of the Pagan world to Christ, while we are laboring to take up the stumbling blocks of nominal Christianity. The hand of God has wonderfully guided this Evangelizing movement from the first, and never so clearly as at present, could the wisdom of his purpose in its origin and progress be discovered. The good which has been done already is, we are satisfied, but small, in comparison with what, by the divine blessing, it is about to do, in this great juncture for which especially it seems to have been raised up. It has already cheered, by its efficient cooperation, the faithful servants of God to whom it has borne the timely aid, along with the sympathy and prayers, of American Christians. It has made its influence felt in various ways in almost every part of Europe. In doing this, it has won the confidence of the friends of Christ both at home and abroad, and gained the most valuable kinds of information and experience. Now then, the organization is all ready for the larger and more vigorous operations which the times demand, if

Europe, must yield and will yield under the direct and faithful application of Evangelical Truth. As it has its seat chiefly in the heart, and is nourished by ignorance and false views of Christianity, there is nothing to prevent its complete removal by the clear presentation of the Gospel in its divine simplicity.

those to whom it looks for its resources, will place at its disposal the necessary means.

And shall we, fellow disciples, fail to do this? Shall we be wanting in our duty now? Shall we see our Saviour going forth to cleanse the deep pollutions of the world, and not promptly rally round him, all ready to do whatever he shall indicate. Oh! if our souls have ever felt the power of dying love, if we have wept and been forgiven at the Cross of our adorable Redeemer, if we are jealous for his honor and longing to see the world which he has ransomed, bowing in homage at his feet: now—now is the time to manifest our devotion to his cause!

Never, certainly, was there so much as now to stir the hearts of the friends of truth. Never had they so much to rouse their courage and inspire their hopes. There was an astonishing waking up of mind in the sixteenth century; but it was as nothing to the rushing activity which marks the present day. The voice of Luther was a glorious voice; and effectually did it scare the dreaming owls of the spiritual Babylon, and set them in commotion. But believe it, my brethren, it is not mere human utterances that now are startling Christendom. The voice of the Reformation was but the bugle blast that aroused the sleeping forces. The sounds which in this our era are coming up from every side and at which the mighty tremble, are the deep thunders of God's own artillery! The matchless pen of Calvin told on the mind of Europe with wonderful effect, and was justly terrible to the enemies of truth. But the agency which to day is

bearing on the cause of liberty and truth and holiness is the putting forth of the arm of Eternal Strength! Who can doubt that wonderful transformations are speedily to surprise the world?

Brethren! let us understand the crisis. Christendom waits for the living word. Christ bids us give it promptly. Let us do it. Faith in the power of truth, faith in the Holy Ghost, faith in the Son of God; and a holy earnestness and energy in duty; these are what we want. With these we shall see the Saviour's Kingdom rise. We may not hope indeed to linger here, till the joyous anthem that celebrates its final triumphs shall go up from all the earth. But we shall hear the tidings in the world of light. Then shall we know, as now we can not fully, the meaning of that thrilling saying of the Prophet, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and THEY THAT TURN MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS AS THE STARS FOREVER AND EVER!"

May God grant it, in the riches of his mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord! AMEN.